GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETIN

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COMMERCE IS NOMADIC IN CAMARGUE

An ancient custom of venders in the little town of Les Saintes Maries de la Mer has been adopted of late in some American cities where "grocery stores on wheels" were considered a modern novelty. See, also, "Camargue, the Cowboy Country of Southern France," by Dr. Andre Vialles, in National Geographic Magazine for July, 1922.

Requests for the Geographic News Bulletin must be renewed if you asked for them last April. If you desire the Bulletins continued please notify The National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C., promptly. The blank following Bulletin No. 4 may be used.

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The Rhone: A Waterway Cinderella

FRANCE's determination to take a seat farther front in the industrial life of Europe holds promise that the Rhone River will approach more nearly the Rhine's importance as a commercial waterway of Europe. Steps already have been taken to improve the Rhone.

The Rhine has an initial advantage. It is inherently more navigable than the Rhone. The latter seems as coquettish as the Rhine is placid in her maturer miles. Cascading in hoydenish fashion, falling, from her cradle in an Alpine glacier, more than 4,500 feet in a little more than a hundred miles, the Rhone broadens into the dazzling beauty of Lake Geneva. Emerging therefrom she disappears prankishly under the rocks at Perte du Rhone, but after emerging from this subterranean channel she becomes "officially navigable" to her mouth.

An Uncertain Beast of Burden

Not until the river passes Lyons does it become a beast of burden and even from Lyons to Arles traffic is handicapped by swift currents and numerous islands, shifting river-bed and shingle banks. At Arles it loses all sense of elderly responsibility and goes preening itself into the triangular delta which outlines Camargue, "the cowboy country of Southern France."

What hope then has Mademoiselle Rhone for rivaling the staid Fraulein Rhine? It is not the Rhine alone, but the canalized Rhine, which has stretched its trade tentacles over Central Europe. Likewise it is not the Rhone, but a prospective canalized Rhone which France is planning to develop.

The Rhine and the Rhone may compare but, of course, cannot compete. If a craft is small enough it may thread its way by water from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. The Rhine and Rhone have canal connections. But the basin of the northern seas and that of the tideless Mediterranean are geographically distinctive and are likely to remain so. Therefore France is treading on no neighbor toes when she hopes to make the Rhone a Rhine of the Mediterranean.

Much Romance; Little Legend

The course of the Rhone teems with romantic fact as does the Rhine with legend. Yet travelers do not follow the Rhone for any considerable distance as they do the Rhine. The Rhone offers a geographical range of appeal from the glaciers of Switzerland to the "Africa in Europe" scenes of Camargue. It is only a little more than 500 miles long, including the 45 miles that count as Lake Geneva. In a distance little greater than that from New York City to Buffalo, it rockets past snow clad mountains, courses through the land of the walnut and chestnut, flows on amid one of the three greatest vineyard lands of France, widens out in more leisurely fashion in the zone of the mulberry tree, and then comes plump upon the tropic rice of the swamps in Camargue.

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GENEVA, ASTRIDE THE RIVER RHONE, WHERE IT ISSUES FROM THE SLEEPING WATERS OF THE CRYSTAL LAKE

See, also, "Geneva: The Millennial City," by Ralph A. Graves, in the National Geographic Magazine for June, 1919

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Little Brothers of Vesuvius

OCCASIONAL eruption of mud volcanoes in the edge of Mexico near the Southern California line may give the impression that this portion of the country is subject to major volcanic outbreaks.

The term "volcano" is a misnomer for these little mounds of boiling mud—a fact that is recognized sometimes by calling them "mud geysers." Most of them, in the matter of size, bear to true volcanoes the relation of the proverbial molehill to the mountain. And while "volcano," with the picture that it brings up of demolished and buried cities, naturally inspires something of awe, "mud volcanoes," when they are not mildly interesting natural phenomena, are little more than nuisances.

Like Geysers

Like geysers, mud volcanoes usually are found in regions that have been subject to true volcanic action within recent geologic times. This is not always true; and "recent" in this sense may mean many thousands of years.

In the case of geysers, water gathers in fissures, a portion of whose walls are hot, steam forms after a time, and the column of water is expelled. In the case of mud volcanoes, a much smaller quantity of water is involved. It is usually turned completely into steam which forces its way through fine material and forms hot mud.

In typical mud volcanoes, the soft mud is forced out with little violence through the top of a small mound and flows down over the sides. Occasionally, however, a heavy column of mud traps the steam for a considerable period, which is ended by a geyser-like eruption that may throw the soft material and chunks of the hardened cone high in the air.

Found All Over World

Mud volcanoes are much more common than geysers. The only places in which geysers exist in appreciable numbers are the Yellowstone National Park—the largest and most important geyser region in the world—Iceland, the Malay archipelago, and the North Island of New Zealand.

Mud volcanoes are scattered around the world. To the eastward they are first encountered in Iceland. In Europe they are found in Sicily, the mainland of Italy and the Russian Crimea; in Asia they occur at Baku, on islands in the Bay of Bengal and on the Malay Archipelago; farther east they are found in New Zealand.

In the Western Hemisphere they are found in Colombia, in the Yellowstone Park, just south of the Mexican-California line in the delta of the Colorado River, and a few miles to the north on the eastern shore of the Salton Sea, in the Imperial Valley.

Bulletin No. 2, April 30, 1923.

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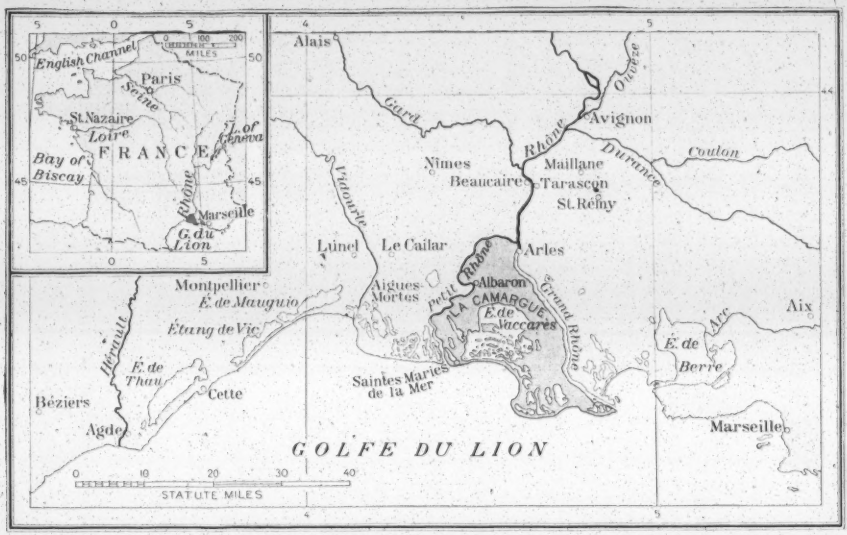
Travelers go along the Rhine. They go across the Rhone. Hannibal began the practice you will recall. The seasoned wanderer in Europe has stood spell-bound by the memories of Geneva, city of Voltaire and Calvin and the "Prisoner of Chillon," birthplace of the Red Cross and home of the League of Nations. He has visited the city of looms when the great Lyons fair was in progress; has explored the antiquarian treasures of Avignon, with its palace of the Popes. Probably he has touched the Rhone where Saint Maurice nestles among the snow-topped peaks, and has gone south to Arles, famous for a synod, a Venus, and a bull-ring which was once an amphitheater. Therefore, in his mind's eye the Rhone is a series of segments; the Rhine is more of a continuity.

Formerly great barges were floated from Lyons to Arles. These were pulled up the river again, canal-fashion, by panting horses. Already considerable work has been done in regulating the Rhone above the delta, and a canal from the Gulf of Foz to the main stream makes the Mediterranean accessible for river navigation which otherwise would have a difficult time in the sluggish lower branches. Canals connect the Rhone with the Loire and the Seine as well as with the Rhine.

Bulletin No. 1, April 30, 1923.



Drawn by James M. Darley. *© National Geographic Society.*

REGION WHERE TWO ARMS OF THE RIVER RHONE CARVE OUT LA CAMARGUE, THE ISLAND "WILD WEST" OF SOUTHERN FRANCE

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Basutoland: "Indian Territory" of South Africa

BASUTOLAND, where the "Young Basutos" are eager to make their government over on a European basis, is a sort of Indian Territory of South Africa. It probably is the most progressive of the native states of the continent, and to a large extent movements there are accepted as prophetic of developments over the whole of South Africa.

Few Whites Permitted in Reservation

The centering of attention on South Africa brings out significant facts about the government of the region, that, though elementary to Africans and British, are not generally known on this side of the world. For example, British South Africa and the self-governing dominion, the Union of South Africa, are not synonymous. Outside the Union—and inside it—are regions not connected governmentally with the Union, but administered directly by the British crown. Of these no better example could be found than Basutoland, an area the size of the kingdom of Belgium, entirely surrounded by the provinces or states of the Union but not subject to them.

This region in effect is a gigantic reservation set apart solely for natives, and whites are not permitted to own land in it. The few whites in the section are officials, missionaries and traders. A species of communism is in force such as that practiced among primitive peoples or under primitive conditions in many parts of the world. Cattle are pastured on "commons"and the chiefs allot plots for agricultural use.

Most Enlightened of Natives

In Basutoland the British have in large measure practiced a hands-off policy. In effect they have merely built a figurative fence around the country; have managed the main machinery of the government, using Basuto laws and customs wherever possible; and have left practically all minor matters to the chiefs to manage in their own way, under a paramount chief who is a sort of kinglet. Education in Basutoland is almost entirely in the hands of missionaries.

Under British guidance and missionary tutelage, the Basutos have forged rapidly ahead to the generally recognized position of the most enlightened group of South African natives. In a century their numbers have grown from 40,000 to nearly half a million; and there are almost as many cattle as people in the country.

An African Switzerland

Physically Basutoland is the Switzerland of South Africa, containing the slopes and some of the summits of the Drakensberg, some of the latter reaching an altitude of 11,000 feet. And the little country has traditions not unlike those of Europe's Mountain Republic.

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A MANDARIN OF ANNAM AND HIS FAMILY. (See Bulletin No. 5)

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Mexican Oil Fields

SINCE the World War has awakened a keen realization to the great part petroleum will play in the industrial and commercial development of the future, interest has turned more and more to Mexico, which contains the most spectacular of the present producing oil fields.

Mexico came into the world race for oil production late. Its first producing well, yielding a modest 50 barrels a day, was brought in not quite twenty years ago. Now it has a group of the greatest gushers in the world, a number of which are capable of producing from 75,000 to 100,000 barrels each of "liquid gold" daily. By 1911 Mexican production reached twelve and a half million barrels annually and surpassed that of three of the long-standing leaders among countries to which the world looked for its oil supply—Rumania, Galicia, and the Dutch East Indies.

Mexico Passes Russia

In 1913 this production was doubled, and by 1917 it had more than doubled again. In 1918 Mexican oil wells yielded nearly 64,000,000 barrels, and in 1919, more than 87,000,000 barrels. This latter production was in excess not only of the current annual production of Russia, previously second among oil producing countries, but also exceeded Russia's high watermark of 85,000,000 barrels in 1901. Now only the United States is ahead of Mexico in oil production.

But Mexico is accepted as having the greatest demonstrated oil field in the world, and it is estimated that if all its producing wells had been permitted to flow at their maximum during 1919 the resulting production would have been 32,000,000 barrels more than the actual production of the entire world in 1918. As a matter of fact only about 12 per cent of the potential flow of the Mexican wells is permitted because storage, refining and transportation facilities are inadequate to take care of more. These facilities are being steadily increased however, and exports alone for 1920 probably average ten million barrels a month, the rate definitely established for the first six months of the year.

The World's Greatest Stream of Oil

The practice of Mexican natives of collecting fragments of asphalt and bitumen which floated on the waters of a large lagoon near the coast of Mexico —south of Tampico, and selling them in the neighboring city, led to the realization that there must be underground petroleum supplies near. Small producing wells and even fairly large producers were brought in from 1901 onward, but it was not until 1908 that the first of the tremendous gushers that have astonished the world was brought in, near San Geronimo, spouting between 60,000 and 75,000 barrels of oil a day.

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Its creator, Moshesh, is considered the brainiest and most able of African chiefs—a dusky Solomon. He welcomed to his mountain stronghold oppressed natives of all tribes and prided himself on his even-handed justice. His people, welded into a nation, successfully defended their liberty against all native attacks, and were even victors on several occasions against Boer and British forces. Finally, when Moshesh grew old he asked that his country be placed under British protection.

Bulletin No. 3, April 30, 1923.

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THE LAKEVIEW "GUSHER" OF CALIFORNIA

In its day a record-breaker, but not comparable to the Mexican "gushers." The spectators on the sand-bag embankment later discovered their linen to be spotted with oil mist. See, also, "Where the World Gets Its Oil," by George Otis Smith, in the National Geographic Magazine for February, 1920.

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Annam: The Albania of Asia

THE WORLD is getting small, you say, yet a monarch whose red pencil scratch makes laws for six million people in a state twice the size of Austria visited Paris some months ago and many well-informed inquired "Who is the Emperor of Annam?"

To the occidental mind the Emperor of Annam may seem a bit belated in visiting Paris, since Annam has been a field of French influence since 1879. From the Annamite point of view the present ruler is exercising a reasonable deliberation, for how is he to know whether these juvenile nations are going to last until they are a few centuries old? Take the Roman and Russian empires, for example. Mere flurries in history to one who sits on the jeweled throne of Annam, beneath the grinning Great Dragon of the Five Imperial Claws which has been biting his sixty-four sacred teeth into the royal emblem since several centuries before the time of Chrst.

Amid the Balkans of the East

If you do not carry the analogy too far Annam may be called the Albania of the East, located on the Balkan Peninsula of Asia.

As you consider this comparison note that pendant from Asia, as from Europe, are three peninsulas, and that Arabia and India, just as Spain and Italy in Europe, comprise ancient civilizations and distinctive peoples. However, in Asia's eastern peninsula, as in the Balkans, one finds a racial medley with alien powers long contending for footholds among them.

India tapers off down the western side, Siam holds the center with a kite-tail sort of an extension south to the Federated Malay states, while on the west coast French Indo-China bulks one-fourth larger than Continental France herself.

Along the South China seacoast of French Indo-China lies the mountain barrier which is Annam, less than a hundred miles wide but nearly 800 miles long. The jagged hills of this range, sparsely peopled by oriental mountaineers, accent the likeness to Albania. Toward the rising sun these mountains look down upon the sea, which they cut off from easy access to the fertile valley of the Mighty Mekong to the west. Physically they bind two plenteous deltas, that of the Red River in Tonkin, on the north, and that of Mekong's many mouths, in Cochin China, to the south.

A "Flapper" of the Orient

A mountain maid of Annam is far different from her more rugged sister of Albania. She wears a "one-piece gown" caught loosely about the waist. Her body is bare save for two long strings of beads, one hanging beneath each breast. She wears as many necklaces as her neck will permit, and her forearm is covered by a spiral metal bracelet. Earrings have enlarged the lobes of her ears, but her most striking feature at first glance is the huge hand-carved pipe she is apt to be smoking. In her exotic appearance one factor alone stands out with uncanny familiarity to western eyes, and that is the way her hair is parted

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No such stream of oil had ever been encountered before and the drillers were entirely unprepared to cope with the situation. The great geyser of oil caught fire from the boiler of the drilling outfit and for two months constituted the greatest and most spectacular oil fire that the world has ever known. The roaring pillar of flame shot upward during its greatest fury to a height of 800 to 1,400 feet, illuminating the countryside at night for many miles, and was visible to ships more than 100 miles at sea. It was finally extinguished by huge pumps throwing streams of gravel and mud.

The gigantic gushers of Mexico are believed to flow not from oil sands as in many fields, but from caverns hollowed from limestone by erosion and later filled with oil. It is supposed that the underground lakes of oil rest on water under artesian pressure. What may eventually be expected is illustrated by one of the most famous of oil wells, the Potrero del Llano. This well flowed a mightly stream of oil for eight years, producing more than a million barrels regularly each month, year in and year out. Finally the golden stream turned to worthless salt water over night.

Tremendous Territory Undeveloped

Rich as the known oil fields of Mexico are, it is possible that only a beginning has been made in uncovering the liquid mineral wealth of the Republic. The fields now under exploitation cover only about 800 square miles. Geologists have found promising structure for oil in Mexico over an area aggregating 230,000 square miles.

The future of the Mexican oil industry is likely to be profoundly affected by political developments. The Mexican constitution of 1917 in effect declares that oil found under land does not belong to the owner of the land but to the state. This provision and regulations based on it have been contested by the foreign interests which control 97 per cent of the Mexican oil industry. Action has been taken both through diplomatic channels and in the Mexican courts, but no final decisions have been reached.

Bulletin No. 4, April 30, 1923.

Form for Renewal of Bulletin Requests

Many requests for the Geographic News Bulletin were made for the year ending with a March, 1923, issue. If you desire the Bulletins continued kindly notify The Society promptly. The attached form may be used:

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and done up in the demure fashion of an American girl of the Civil War period. The girls of Annam have far more freedom than those of China and have one advantage over their occidental sisters—for in Annam the boys take care of the babies.

Coming down from the mountains, away from the wilder peoples of Annam, known as Mois, the similitude to Albania fades. For you encounter an ancient civilization, comparable to and largely patterned after, that of China. Hue, Annam's capital and port, situated half way along its lengthy coast line, discloses a series of red roofed abodes, where live the mandarins, and one magnificent establishment, roofed in yellow, where the emperor dwells. True, the French protectorate has curtailed his absolute sway in some important particulars, but to his millions of subjects he still is the sole and supreme ruler.

Has Secret Service Men

The present young monarch of ancient Annam is democratic. When he goes abroad for diversion he rides in an open carriage but the palanquin still is employed in his official travels. He is not inaccessible when he moves about the vast courts of the Imperial Palace, usually surrounded by secretaries, stewards and secret service men of this oriental executive.

But when he sits in state the golden door that leads to his throne room is closed to all but the extraordinary ambassadors who must kneel and touch their venerable foreheads three times to the ground before they may enter the royal presence. The young king follows the customs of many imperial generations by anointing himself with oil and weighing himself down with jewels.

Has Luxury of Versailles

In luxury and extent the palaces of Hue are comparable with those of Versailles. The monumental gate, broad terraces with their gigantic urns, perfume burners, rooms of gold and silver in rarest pattern, and children's ballet, betoken a high degree of culture.

Bulletin No. 5, April 30, 1923.

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COLLAPSED MUD VOLCANO NEAR VOLCANO LAKE, MEXICO, 40 MILES SOUTH OF THE INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY LINE